

Monaco

The Principality & Its Temple of Chance

By Herbert Vivian, M.A.

Author and Traveller

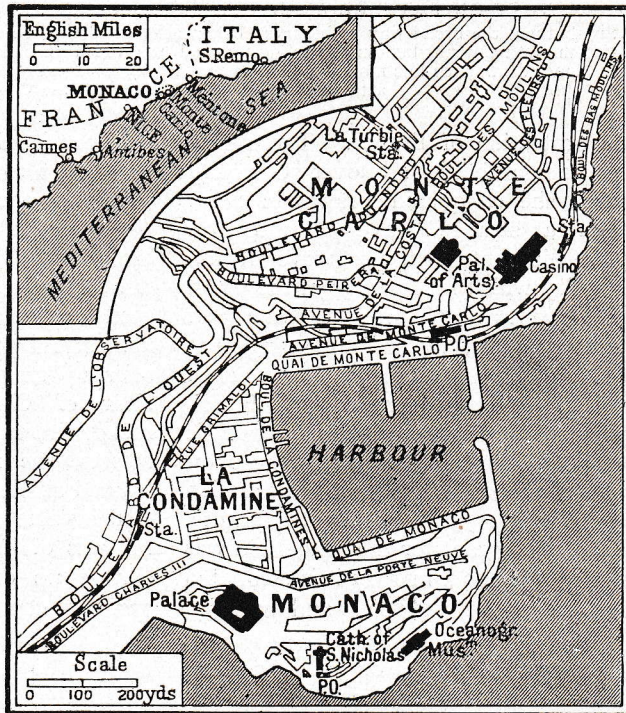
THE beauty-spot or plague-spot of Europe, according to your point of view. But then the question arises, what is beauty?

At Monaco you have a vivid cobalt sea, rugged reddish rocks which assume exquisite tints at the rising and setting of the sun, perfumed scrub, vulgar villas with white walls and red roofs. There is too much colour, too much of the atmosphere of the picture post-card. But once you steal away from blaring bands, over or under-dressed smart sets, "flannelled fools" with tennis racquets, the world and the half-world, all that rush and riot of a fashionable pleasure resort which takes no interest in anything but pleasure, you may create an atmosphere of your own, seek soothing olives, and listen to the clatter-clatter, ting-a-ling-a-ling of the sturdy little basket-carriages and pairs as they extract melody from the hard, well-kept high roads.

Hercules was the original settler at Monaco, but even his strength did not suffice to establish activity until the latter half of the nineteenth century. The rock of Monaco and the bay below Monte Carlo were an ideal stronghold for pirates, who used to pounce upon the rich galleons of fat Genoese merchants all through the Middle Ages. In 968, princes of the House of Grimaldi established a principality which has freakishly survived to this

day. There are still a lordly palace, a modest Roman-Byzantine cathedral, rambling episcopal buildings, and the seat of an international hydrographic bureau, established in 1921, majestically aloof from worldly frivolity and the ever hectic fever of gambling,

The little state covers a total area of eight square miles, is surrounded (except on the side towards the sea) by the French department of Alpes Maritimes, and has a total population of about 23,000, in the towns of Monaco, La Condamine, and Monte Carlo. It was French in 1792-1815, for a few months in 1859-60 was in the hands of the Sardinians, and was given a constitution by the prince in 1911. Since 1861 it has been under



THE PRINCIPALITY AND TOWN OF MONACO



TREE-GIRT TERRACE WHERE COURTIER OF FORTUNE WALK

Sun-bathed, the broad way with carven balustrades and long line of lamps, sweeps round behind this tall and towered building to the left, in all the world the most famed of its kind, whose brilliance draws men like moths and long after they have passed continues in its gay allure, subtly attractive, splendidly indifferent—the Casino

Photo, J. Enrietti

the protection of France. There used to be gambling all over Germany before she conquered France in 1870, when a strange wave of morality, quite different from the wave of immorality which followed upon the Great War, swept away gambling as though it were a plague, without reflecting that it is an ineradicable instinct. An outlet had to be found for it. The Principality of Monaco, unlike the Republic of San Marino, succumbed to the overtures of financiers and gave a concession for roulette and trente-et-quarante. The annual grant for the concession was in 1917 £80,000; in 1927 it is estimated that it will be £90,000; and in 1937, £100,000.

Everything began on a very small scale. Lord Brougham had not yet discovered Cannes, and all the Riviera

still consisted of poor fishing villages leading up to the town of Nice, a very provincial town, with nothing much to boast about except that it was the birthplace of Garibaldi and Escoffier, the Carlton cook. Impenitent gamblers used to come from long distances in little steamers over a troublesome sea to offer up small sums of money at the altar of Chance. But when desert rocks were transformed into fashionable resorts, the monopoly of Monaco attracted all the gamblers of the world.

The value of land rose from a few to millions of francs an acre, huge hotels sprang up on every rock, villas and gardens occupied every crevice, and the place became a paradise for everybody who had the courage not to gamble. Taxation was abolished, the natives became almost pensioners, and

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the principality, long before the era of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, realized possibilities of making the foreigner pay.

No doubt the prince found relief from the small cares of his tiny state, but he must soon have realized that he had lost much of his dignity and most of his prestige. A limited company became sovereign in everything but name.

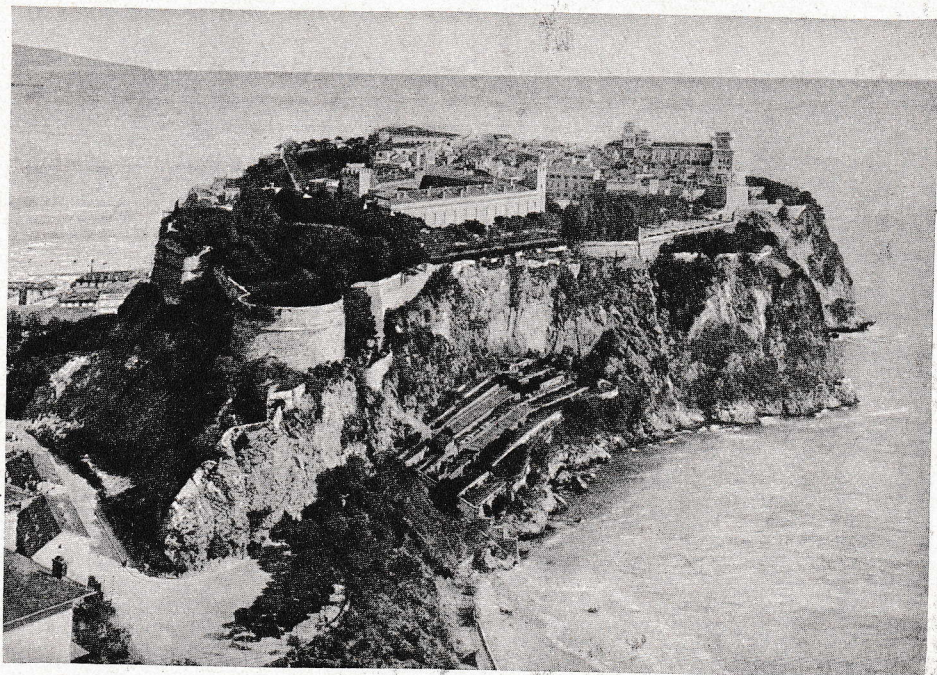
The chief, if not the only claim of Monte Carlo to respect, is the scrupulous fairness of its play. I do not commit myself to an opinion about the truth of this tradition.

I have heard of associations between employees and gangs of swindlers for packing the cards and securing small fortunes. I have no proof of any such allegations. But I hesitate to believe that a profit of one to three per cent. on every turn of the wheel suffices to provide the prince with his appanage, to pay all the taxes of the state, to

supply the best band and operas in Europe free of charge, to maintain all the grandeur and luxury which are lavished on all sides with an open hand.

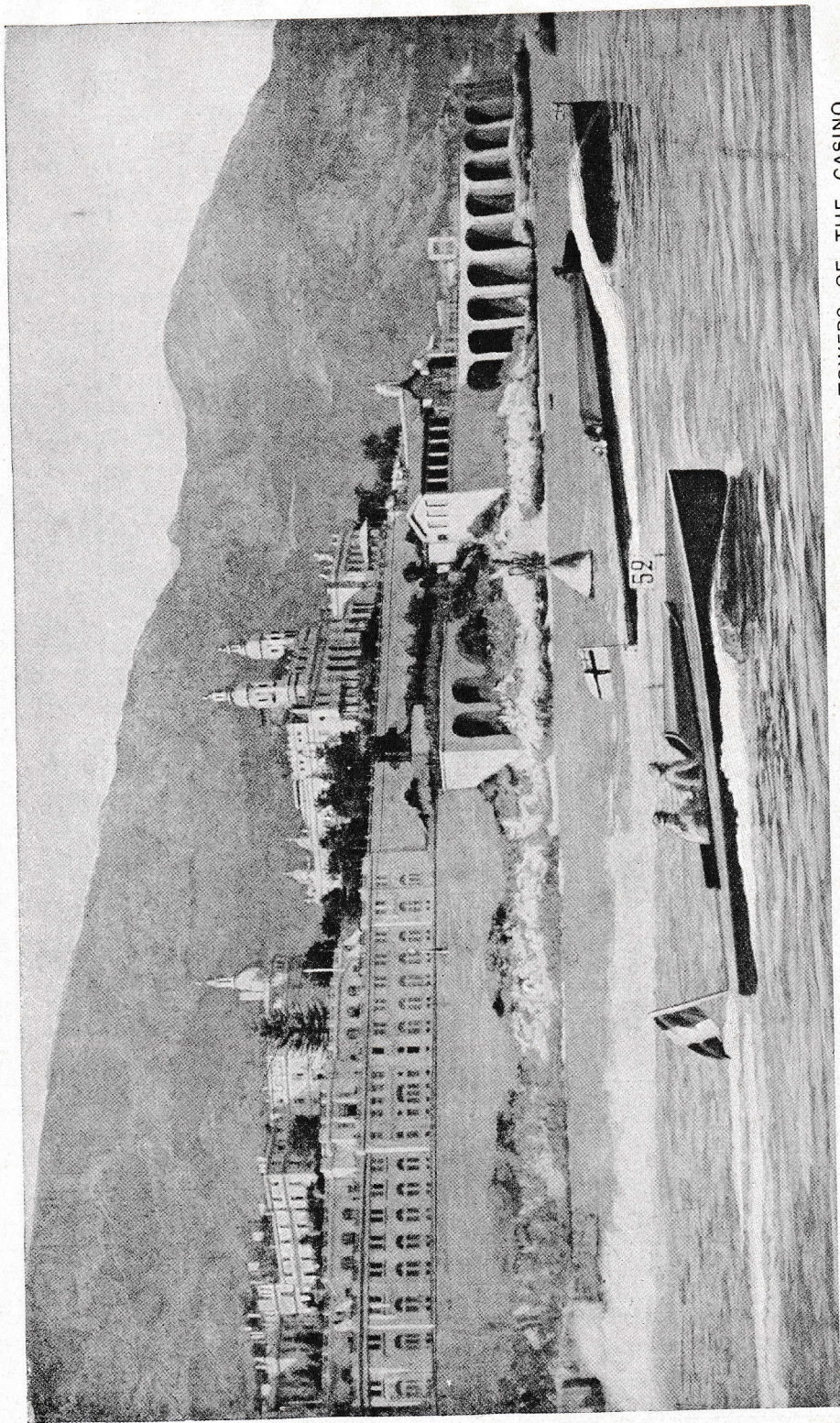
The Casino at Monte Carlo is a wonderful place for the study of human nature. Go there in the early morning after breakfast, hang about in the great hall, and watch the characteristic crowd of regular players. They are seedy for the most part, old widows and snuffy men with skull-caps, carrying little rakes and notebooks of their own, forming themselves into a queue at the great gates of the Temple of Chance.

The atmosphere is usually as calm as that of a bank. The invitations to play and the announcements of numbers are solemn and tedious. It is only after dinner that beauty and fashion, the world and the half-world, begin to cast their fortunes upon the board of green cloth. Even so there is no longer the atmosphere of wealth, for instead of the



MONACO'S ROCK-FOUNDED TOWN AND PALACE THAT JUT INTO THE SEA

Still defended by the grim ramparts that kept it safe in other years, the town of Monaco and the palace of the prince stand nearly two hundred feet above the blue Mediterranean that washes the red cliff's foot. Some two thousand people have their dwelling upon this mighty rock which boasts also a cathedral and the seat of the international hydrographic bureau



BRITISH AND FRENCH RACERS OF THE SHALLOW SEAS BENEATH THE TWIN TOWERS OF THE CASINO

One of the world's great sporting events is the International Motor-Boat Week at Monte Carlo. There, watched by crowds from those white walls, the long, lean craft, hungry for speed, go swaying through the spray, cutting a green-and-white furrow in the calm sea, and leaving a whirl of seething water in their spreading wakes. Here, two competing boats, going comparatively slowly, are taking up their positions, the further, flying the White Ensign, being the winner of the Prix des Nations. At full speed, these boats make a stern wave as high as the bent backs of their crews



WHEN CLERGY AND MILITARY UNITE TO HONOUR SACRED RELICS

S. Devoté is the patron saint of Monaco, her dead body, according to various legends, having been washed ashore or brought there from Corsica. Annually, on January 27, her relics are carried in their casket, as seen above, from the fortalice to the vale of Gaumates, her original burial place behind Monte Carlo. On the way, the port receives a blessing from the sacred casket



CLOSE-HAULED ON THE STARBOARD TACK AT MONTE CARLO REGATTA

Monte Carlo has many attractions besides its Casino, in the way of battles of flowers, pigeon-shooting, tennis tournaments, and regattas. There are few fairer sights than a cluster of yachts with the sun on their sails between the two blues of sky and sea in this region of halcyon weather. With taut mainsail and bellying jib, the slim yacht leans gently over to the push of the breeze

Photo, J. Enrietti

pre-war £4 gold pieces with the effigy of the Prince of Monaco, you are now restricted to wretched counters which may be very easy to forge.

What has always impressed me most about Monte Carlo is the amazing organization. You arrive, a perfect stranger, and go into an office to receive your ticket. Within an hour or two an elaborate system of espionage, quite equal to that of the traditional Jesuits, has discovered every detail of your career. You are watched everywhere you go, the names and histories of your friends and acquaintances are carefully docketed.

The whole atmosphere of the place is melodramatic. There is somebody listening to your every conversation on a bench or the terrace while you watch the pigeon-shooting, or when you are eating *Ciro's* strawberry tartlets at the price of molten gold. High up in the inner roof of the gambling-rooms are spies watching your every movement.

Each wall has not only an ear but a secret door.

As a typical instance I may mention a slight quarrel which was concluded by an exchange of slaps. Almost before anybody could realize that tempers as well as money had been lost, a number of sleek attendants had separated the disputants and led them away to different walls which opened to receive them as they might have done in the "Arabian Nights" at a magic word of a mysterious jinn.

A friend of mine was once taken ill, and called a flunkey to provide him with a restorative. He was conducted to an "open sesame" place, helped along mysterious passages, and suddenly found himself surrounded by formidable-looking surgeons in white garments. If there had been any reason for making him disappear, no one would ever have been able to trace him again.

And disappearances are as frequent at Monte Carlo as they are mysterious.

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If you lost your bride or your best friend there would not be the faintest hope of finding a trace.

Suicides occur at the tables, people pulling out revolvers and spattering the cloth with their blood. In a trice the corpse is hustled away, sponges remove every mark, and the game proceeds all the more merrily, because a suicide is supposed to be lucky. No one has ever ascertained the statistics of suicide at Monte Carlo, but they are undoubtedly large. This is not necessarily against the administration, which hates and guards itself ingeniously against every scandal, going so far as to provide funds, commonly called a "viaticum," for the fare of broken-down gamblers to go home.

The precautions taken against scandal at Monte Carlo involve the risk that murdered people may be taken for suicides and spirited away, to the

obvious advantage of criminals. There is a story about a man who lost everything he had and went to lie down in the gardens with a revolver in his hand. Within a few seconds officials came to fill his pockets with gold and banknotes to prove that he had not made away with himself for reasons of poverty. Whereupon he rose and walked away.

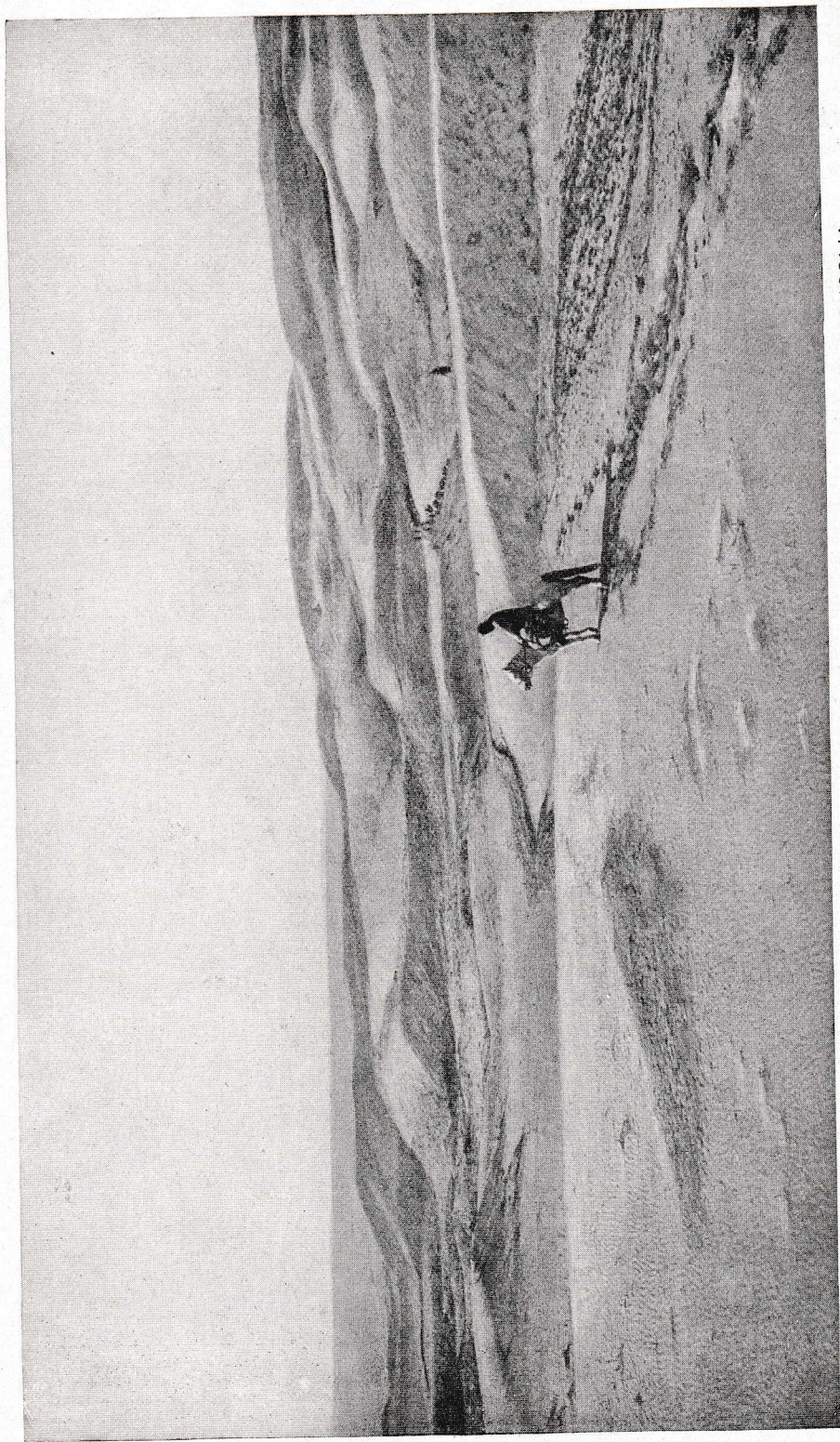
It is strange that the reorganizers of Europe after the Great War did not occupy themselves with the anomalous position of a little state which exists only by battenning upon the foibles of mankind. There is now talk of cancelling the concession to the gambling company which enjoys the innocent name of the "Sea-bathing Society of Monaco," and restricting the attractions of the place to the level of its neighbours, but such drastic action would require the intervention of the League of Nations.



BEFORE THE HYDROPATHIC ESTABLISHMENT ON THE CASINO TERRACE

At the extreme end of the Casino Terrace this fine building for hydropathic treatment has been erected. There are various kinds of treatment, Turkish and ordinary baths, and instead of extending upwards, two or three storeys have been excavated in the rock beneath. The white stone of its construction is in harmony with so much of the decorative effects on this sea-front of sunshine

Photo, J. Enrietti



LONELY LIFE ON A CARAVAN TRACK IN THE WILD RANGES OF BARREN MONGOLIA

In the great Ordos Desert lie vast stretches of sand similar to those of the Gobi Desert. About this dreary landscape, relieved slightly by wave-like hillocks and dunes, and a little thorny and wiry vegetation, a caravan will now and then make its way; but the deep silence brooding over this immense wilderness is rarely broken, and the eye gradually loses all sense of distance, so that the dim mountain-edge appears to fringe the earth many hundreds of miles away.